



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff **Scott Mittelstadt** Chief Deputy

Facebook Posts Inciting Fear

Recently there have been a number of Facebook posts alleging that individuals have been followed on freeways, in stores, at gas stations and other locations. The authors imply they feel like they are the target of potential abductions. As a result of these posts, many people have had concern about going out in public and a fear for their safety. I would like to let everyone know that we have looked into several of these alleged incidents and so far have not been able to be substantiate the ones reported on Facebook. In fact, I am not aware of any that have been reported to the sheriff's office by those who allege these incidents occurred.

For whatever reason, individuals across the country have decided to post these fake attempted abduction stories. In a quick google search I was able to find numerous reports of these occurring across the country over the last several years. My message to anyone who reads these posts is to verify the information before sharing them. Facebook and other social media give us the ability to disseminate information quickly, but stories like these create a "boy who cried wolf" scenario and when something real actually occurs, people take those incidents less serious. I encourage anyone who read these messages to check with law enforcement to see if they are legitimate.

For those who think making up an attempted abduction story is a good idea, I ask you to think before you post. Inciting panic in our community isn't a joke. It has legitimately changed the way people live. I have had numerous people approach me because they fear going out in public. Parents have expressed concern over allowing their children to take part in extracurricular activities. In a world that already has its share of tragedy, it is troubling that this type of activity gives parents and families one more thing to worry about.

In an effort to prepare you if you should ever find yourself being watched or followed, first and foremost, call 911 and notify us of what is occurring. The sooner we know about what is occurring, the sooner we can respond, keep you safe and investigate. If you are driving and being followed, drive to populated areas, better yet, drive to a police department or sheriff's office.

When walking in public it is always a good idea to go with someone else. If you find yourself being followed or someone is acting suspicious, again please contact law enforcement and let us know. Immediately walk to places that are well populated and well lit. If at a store, notify an employee of what is occurring and ask for assistance.

While these occurrences can happen and you should always be on alert, it is important to know that they are very rare. By staying alert to your surroundings and taking the proper steps to keep yourself safe, you can enjoy everything that Dodge County has to

offer including traveling, shopping and enjoying recreational activities.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to thank the citizens of Dodge County for selecting me as your sheriff for another four years. I look forward to continuing to serve the citizens of Dodge County as we all work together in keeping Dodge County a safe place to live, work and visit.

Dale Schmidt
Dodge County Sheriff